Objections to Anarchism

George Barrett

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Contents

Preface 3
Introduction 3
No. 1 5
No. 2 7
No. 3 7
No. 4 8
No. 5 9
No. 6 9
No. 7 10
No. 8 10
No. 9 11
No. 10 11
No. 11 11
No. 12 12
No. 13 13
No. 14 14
No. 15 14
No. 16 16
No. 17 17
No. 18 17
No. 19 18
No. 20 18
No. 21 19
No. 22 20
No. 23 21
No. 24 22

Preface

In these answers to Objections, an instalment of his writings which are being posthumously published, George Barrett produced a propagandist work of very great value to the cause of Anarchism, and one which we may be assured will occupy an important place in its literature. The form itself is fortunate: the method of debate, the swift encounter of wits in the antagonism of question and answer, is an advantage vivid in its effect, rousing in some degree even to the apathetic; and few with these examples before them will lightly attempt to gainsay the extraordinary power, directness, and logic of Barrett in the field of controversy. The reader, friend and opponent alike, will be interested to note not only that each objection is fairly and squarely met, but that out of a variety of possible answers only the line of argument most vital to the issue is here put forward, briefly yet comprehensively, and with all the mathematical rigour of demonstration the author's mind required. We are left in no doubt as to where the weight of the answer lies, counter it if we can.

Barrett, however, is more than a clear and vigorous propagandist and disputant. His writings, while they teach and uniquely emphasise the teaching, are unceasingly a vibrant call to thought, they promote thought. Argumentatively none can be more finely satisfying, more conclusive than he. Nevertheless the thought somehow does not finally rest on that. By its aid we free ourselves possibly from a misapprehension or a prejudice, in itself a notable experience, a means of growth. Yet, exceeding this achievement, on which alone he is intent, the tremendous energy of Barrett's thought imparts its thrill, its impulse; there appears even to be something causative in it; it is as though a vista opens rather than that a scene closes, and a new world swims into our ken, amazing in its possibilities. We are stimulated not only to think along the same lines but to think for ourselves creatively, as with quickened insight we begin to realise the solvent greatness of the principle of Freedom from which we perceive his reasoning derives, and to what **simplicity** and harmony of result it leads us. He has come closer to the fact of things by the more than moral sincerity of his thought; and that high beauty which Emerson says is ever proportionate to the depth of thought adds its influence to the message, so that the very expression which conveys the thought is liberalive and inspiring. Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty; and in Barrett mathematician and poet, unite to establish the maxim. Skilled engineer, born journalist to whom the columns of the best technical journals in England were always open, practical designer, mathematician familiar with the deepest intricacies of the Calculus, he was yet poet, orator, dreamer (one supposes) — and Anarchist. And his finest integration, the important thing he would have us understand in all its hearings, that "one thought, one grace, one wonder at the least" which it is his virtue to have envisaged and inspired, is the practicality, the sufficiency, the splendour, and the entire reasonableness of Liberty.

Glasgow,
W. Wilson.

Introduction

A few years of rough and tumble of propaganda in the Anarchist movement leaves a strange impression of crowds on the speaker's mind. His answers to questions and opposition form much the most satisfactory part of his work after he has sufficient experience to be able to deal with

them adequately, and it is just from them he gets to understand his crowd. One of the strangest things that experience at such work reveals is the similarity of the crowd's mind (if one may use such an expression) wherever it may be found.

Let the speaker choose his pitch in the middle of London, or let him go to the strange mining villages north of the Forth, and in both cases he will get the same questions in almost the same words. If he is able to understand his crowd, he will find it suffering from the same difficulties, and making the same weary and half-hearted struggle to break the bonds of the old superstitions that still bind it. It is passing strange that amid the theatres, the picture galleries, and museums of London — so suggestive of the fulness and richness of life; among the great engineering works and structures of Manchester and the Clyde, which speak so eloquently of the power man has of producing wealth; in the midst of the fruitful valleys of England, or among the vast Scotch mountains — it matters not where — there is the same lack of vision, the same sad, kind-hearted men willing to hear the new gospel, but alas! the same despair. This hopelessness on the faces of men who are all-powerful is the most exasperating and the most tragic thing in all human existence. "Your strength lies no nearer and no further off than your own limbs. The world grows rich by your strength, no more surely than you grow poor by the same power. It were easier for you to make yourselves great than to make others so while you bring misery on yourselves." Such is the message of the revolutionist, and the mute answer might be expressed in the tragic words of Goethe:

> "Hush! Leave us where we are, resigned,
> Wake not ambitious longings in the mind,
> Born of the night, akin with night alone,
> Scarce to ourselves, and to none others known."

But I write so far of crowds, and crowds after all do not count. He who speaks merely to his crowd will become an orator, a success, and probably a Member of Parliament; but he who sees in each face confronting him a potential individual will have an experience as dear to him as it is painful. He will never grow to the size of an M.P. He will not set out to teach the ignorant people, for they will teach him. Above all, he will not sacrifice his pleasure for the movement, for in it he will find all the meaning of his life, and with the unshakeable confidence of the great Titan he will say: "I know but this, that it must come." But I fear I grow too sensible, and must apologise to my reader for thus wasting his time.

The questions which I have set myself to answer are not arranged to give an exhibition of skill in dealing with them. Everyone of them is an old friend. They have turned up persistently and cheerfully in all sorts of halls, and at any street corner. Be they crushed with the greatest severity, they, boldly and serenely, come tumbling up to the platform on the very next occasion, until one comes to know them, and to love them for their very stupidity — for there is no denying that some of them are stupid in the extreme.

It is strange indeed to wonder how some of these questions have been born; who originated them, and why they have become so widespread.

Thus, for example, No. 2 (which implies that the House of Commons can be used to obtain our ends because it has been successfully used by the capitalists to obtain theirs) is a question as common as any, and is, as its nature implies, usually put by a Parliamentary Socialist. Now, is it not a strange problem whence this question can have come, and why it should be so persistent? It

is surely certain that the man who originated it must have had intelligence enough to see that the thing is absurd on the face of it. I am perfectly sure that the men who generally ask it would be quite capable of thinking out the answer to it if they devoted two minutes to the attempt. Yet that question has been created by someone, and either re-created or repeated endlessly throughout the whole country. It forms a good example of the blindness with which people fight for their political party. This party blindness and deafness (a pity it were not dumbness also) is one of the greatest difficulties to be overcome. Against it our weapons are useless. Let our arguments be of the boldest or most subtle type, they can make no headway against him whose faith is in his party.

This is indeed a subject fit for the introduction to not merely a little pamphlet, but to the whole world's literature, for it is difficult to realise how many books are sealed, how many libraries are closed to that great crowd who remain loyal to their party, and consequently regardless of the truth. If it is necessary to take an example we may always find one near at hand. The Socialist politicians are as good as any. For years their energies have been expended in advocating State control and guardianship in all things. To-day we have Old-Age Pensions, Insurance Acts, and Mr. Lloyd George's plans for "Socialisation," as he terms it, *i.e.,* Government control of the munition works, and some prospect of compulsory military service; but though these things work towards the universal State, the average party Socialist quarrels with them all — and why ?

They are not perfect from his point of view, it may be admitted; but who can deny that they are steps in the direction he has been advocating? Why then does he not hail them with delight? They have not been introduced by his party.

For such men the arguments in this little book are not written. They lie under a heavy curse, which no wit of mine can lessen. Their lives in their own small way are like that of Ibsen's Emperor Julian, and with him, on the eve of battle, they cry with their petty voices: "I must call upon something without and above me…. I will sacrifice to this god and to that. I will sacrifice to many. One or the other must surely hear me."

Our advanced men have ceased to pray and sacrifice to the gods in the hour of need, but still at every little difficulty they feel the necessity of some power outside themselves. Almost every objection given here is prompted by this modern form of superstition, and almost every answer may be put in the words of the philosopher Maximus, who tries in vain to stimulate self-reliance in his friend Julian: "To what gods, oh fool? Where are they… and what are they?… I believe in you."

No. 1

What will you do with the man who will not work?

First of all, let us notice that this question belongs to a class to which many others belong. All social theories must obviously be based on the assumption that men are social: that is, that they will live and work together naturally, because by so doing they can individually better enjoy their lives. Therefore all such difficulties, which are really based on the supposition that men are not social, can be raised not against Anarchism alone, but against any system of society that one chooses to suggest.

Questions 11, 12, 13 and 15 belong to this class, which are merely based on supposition. My opponents will realise how futile they are if I use a similar kind of argument against their system

of government. Suppose, I argue, that having sent your representatives into the House of Commons they will not sit down and legislate, but that they will just play the fool, or, perhaps, vote themselves comfortable incomes, instead of looking after your welfare. It will be answered to this that they are sent there to legislate, and that in all human probability they will do so. Quite so; but we may still say "Yes, but suppose they don't?" and whatever arguments are brought forward in favour of government they can always, by simply *supposing,* be rendered quite useless, since those who oppose us would never be able to actually guarantee that our governors would govern. Such an argument would be absurd, it is quite true; for though it may happen that occasionally legislators will sit down and vote themselves incomes instead of attending to the affairs of the nation, yet we could not use this as a logical argument against the government system.

Similarly, when we are putting forward our ideas of free co-operation or Anarchism, it is not good enough to argue, "Yes, but suppose your co-operators will not co-operate?" for that is what questions of this class amount to.

It is because we claim to be able to show that it is wrong in principle that we, as Anarchists, are against government. In the same way, then, those who oppose Anarchism ought not to do so by simply supposing that a man will do this, or won't do that, but they ought to set themselves to show that Anarchism is in principle opposed to the welfare of mankind.

The second interesting point to notice about the question is that it is generally asked by a Socialist. Behind the question there is obviously the implication that he who asks it has in his mind some way of forcing men to work. Now the most obvious of all those who will not work is the man who is on strike, and if you have a method of dealing with the man who will not work it simply means that you are going to organise a system of society where the government will be so all-powerful that the rebel and the striker will be completely crushed out. You will have a government class dictating to a working class the conditions under which it must labour, which is exactly what both Anarchists and Socialists are supposed to be struggling against to-day.

In a free society the man who will not work, if he should exist at all, is at least brought on equal terms with the man who will. He is not placed in a position of privilege so that he need not work, but on the contrary that argument which is so often used against Anarchism comes very neatly into play here in its favour. It is often urged that it is necessary to organise in order to live. Quite so, and for this reason the struggle for life compels us to organise, and there is no need for any further compulsion on the part of the government. Since to organise in society is really to work in society, it is the law of life which constantly tends to make men work, whilst it is the artificial laws of privilege which put men in such a position that they need not work. Anarchism would do away with these artificial laws, and thus it is the only system which constantly tends to eliminate the man who will not work.

We might perhaps here quote John Stuart Mill's answer to this objection:

> "The objection ordinarily made to a system of community of property and equal distribution of produce — 'that each person would be incessantly occupied in evading his share of the work' — is, I think, in general, considerably overstated… Neither in a rude nor in a civilized society has the *supposed difficulty* been experienced. In no community has idleness ever been a cause of failure." — *J. S. Mill*, "Political Economy," Vol. I., p. 251.

No. 2

The House of Commons and the Law have been used by the present dominant class to gain their ends; why cannot they be used by us to gain ours?

This question is based upon an extraordinary misunderstanding. It seems to be taken for granted that Capitalism and the workers' movement both have the same end in view. If this were so, they might perhaps use the same means; but as the capitalist is out to perfect his system of exploitation and government, whilst the worker is out for emancipation and liberty, naturally the same means cannot be employed for both purposes. This surely answers the question sufficiently so far as it is a definite question. In so far, however, as it contains the vague suggestion that government is the agent of reform, progress, and revolution, it touches the very point upon which Anarchists differ from all political parties. It is worth while, then, to examine the suggestion a little more closely.

It is thought by the enthusiastic politicians that once they can capture government, then from their position of power they would be able very quickly to mould society into the desired shape. Pass ideal laws, they think, and the ideal society would be the result. How simple, is it not? We should thus get the Revolution on the terms promised us by the wonderful Blatchford — "without bloodshed, and without losing a day's work," But, alas! the short cut to the Golden Age is an illusion. In the first place, any form of society shaped by law is not ideal. In the second place, law cannot shape society; indeed, rather the reverse is true. It is this second point which is all-important. Those who understand the forces behind progress will see the law limping along in the rear, and never succeeding in keeping up with the progress made by the people; always, in fact, resisting any advance, always trying to start reaction, but in the long run always having to give way and allow more and more liberty. Even the champions of government recognise this when they want to make a drastic change, and then they throw aside the pretence of the law and turn to revolutionary methods. The present ruling class, who are supposed to be a living proof that the Government can do anything, are in themselves quite candid in the admission that it can do very little. Whoever will study their rise to power will find that to get there they preach in theory, and establish in fact, the principle of resistance to the law. Indeed, curious as it may seem, it is a fact that immediately after the Revolution it was declared seditious to preach against resistance to law, just as to-day it is seditious to speak in favour of it.

To sum up, then, if there was any logic in the question, which there is not, we might restate it thus: "Since the present dominant class were unable to gain their ends by use of the House of Commons and the Law, why should we hope to gain ours by them?"

No. 3

All change is slow by Evolution, and not sudden, as the Anarchists wish to make it by Revolution.

It is quite true that every great change is slowly prepared by a process of evolution almost imperceptible. Sometimes changes are carried right through from beginning to end by this slow process, but on the other hand it is quite clear that very often evolution leads slowly up to a climax, and then there is a sudden change in the condition of things. This is so obvious that it seems scarcely worth while to elaborate the point. Almost anywhere in Nature we can see the double process: the plant which slowly, very slowly, ripens its germs of new life, quite suddenly

exposes these to new conditions, and when they enter these new conditions they slowly begin to change again. An almost laughably good example of this, amongst many others, is furnished by a little fungus called the *pilo bolus.* This, which very slowly and innocently ripens its spores like any other ordinary little plant, will, when the moment comes, suddenly shoot out a jet of water in which the spores are carried, and which it throws to a distance of sometimes as much as three feet, although the plant itself is very small. Now it is perfectly true that in this case the necessary pressure is slowly evolved; it has taken long for all the conditions to imperceptibly ripen, and as the pressure has increased the cell wall has been giving way. There comes a time, however, when that wall can stretch no further — and then it has suddenly burst asunder, and the new germs of life have been thrown violently into their new conditions, and according to these new conditions so do they develop.

So is it with the conditions of society. There is always amongst the people the spirit of freedom slowly developing, and tyranny is slowly receding or stepping back to make room for this development. But there comes a time when the governmental or tyrannical part has not enough elasticity to stretch so far as the pressure of Liberty, developing within, would make it. When this point is reached the pressure of the new development bursts the bonds that bind it, and a revolution takes place. In the actual case in point the change proposed is so radical that it would mean the entire extinction of the governmental element in society. It is certain, then, that it will not gently *stretch* itself to this point, especially as it shows us on every possible occasion that it is ready to use violence in its most brutal forms. For this reason most Anarchists believe that the change will be sudden, and therefore we use the term "revolution," recognising that it does not replace the term "evolution," but accompanies it.

No. 4

It is necessary to organise in order to live, and to organise means Government; therefore Anarchism is impossible.

It is true that it is necessary to organise in order to live, and since we all wish to live we shall all of our own free will organise, and do not need the compulsion of government to make us do so. Organisation does not mean government. All through our ordinary daily work we are organising without government. If two of us lift a table from one side of the room to the other, we naturally take hold one at each end, and we need no Government to tell us that we must not over-balance it by both rushing to the same end; the reason why we agree silently, and organise ourselves to the correct positions, is because we both have a common purpose: we both wish to see the table moved. In more complex organisations the same thing takes place. So long as organisations are held together only by a common purpose they will automatically do their work smoothly. But when, in spite of conflicting interests, you have people held together in a common organisation, internal conflict results, and some outside force becomes necessary to preserve order; you have, in fact, governmental society. It is the Anarchist's purpose to so organise society that the conflict of interests will cease, and men will co-operate and work together simply because they have interests in common. In such a society the organisations or institutions which they will form will be exactly in accordance with their needs; in fact, it will be a representative society.

Free organisation is more fully discussed in answer to Questions 5 and 23.

No. 5

How would you regulate the traffic?

We should not regulate it. It would be left to those whose business it was to concern themselves in the matter. It would pay those who used the roads (and therefore had, in the main, interests in common in the matter) to come together and discuss and make agreements as to the rules of the road. Such rules in fact which at present exist have been established by custom and not by law, though the law may sometimes take it on itself to enforce them.

This question we see very practically answered to-day by the great motor clubs, which are entered voluntarily, and which study the interest of this portion of the traffic. At dangerous or busy corners a sentry is stationed who with a wave of the hand signals if the coast is clear, or if it is necessary to go slowly. First-aid boxes and repair shops are established all along the road, and arrangements are made for conveying home motorists whose cars are broken down.

A very different section of road users, the carters, have found an equally practical answer to the question. There are, even to-day, all kinds of understandings and agreements amongst these men as to which goes first, and as to the position they shall each take up in the yards and buildings where they work. Amongst the cabmen and taxi-drivers the same written and unwritten agreements exist, which are as rigidly maintained by free understandings as they would be by the penalties of law.

Suppose now the influence of government were withdrawn from our drivers. Does anyone believe that the result would be chaos? Is it not infinitely more likely that the free agreements at present existing would extend to cover the whole necessary field? And those few useful duties now undertaken by the Government in the matter: would they not be much more effectively carried out by free organisation among the drivers?

This question has been much more fully answered by Kropotkin in "The Conquest of Bread." In this he shows how on the canals in Holland the traffic (so vital to the life of that nation) is controlled by free agreements, to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned. The railways of Europe, he points out, also, are brought into co-operation with one another and thus welded into one system, not by a centralised administration, but by agreements and counter-agreements between the various companies.

If free agreement is able to do so much even now, in a system of competition and government, how much more could it do when competition disappears, and when we trust to our own organisation instead of to that of a paternal government.

No. 6

If a man will not vote for the Revolution, how can you Anarchists expect him to come out and fight for it?

This question is very often asked, and that is the only excuse for answering it. For my part, I find it generally enough to suggest to the questioner that though I find it very difficult to imagine myself voting for him, I do not find it half so unlikely that I might shoot him.

Really the objection entirely begs the question. Our argument is that to vote for a labour leader to have a seat in Parliament is *not* to vote for the Revolution. And it is because the people instinc-

tively know that they will not get Liberty by such means that the parliamentarians are unable to awaken any enthusiasm.

No. 7

If you abolish competition you abolish the incentive to work.

One of the strangest things about society to-day is that whilst we show a wonderful power to produce abundant wealth and luxury, we fail to bring forth the simplest necessities. Everyone, no matter what his political, religious or social opinions may be, will agree in this. It is too obvious to be disputed. On the one hand there are children without boots; on the other hand are the boot-makers crying out that they cannot sell their stock. On the one hand there are people starving or living upon unwholesome food, and on the other hand provision merchants complain of bad trade. Here are homeless men and women sleeping on the pavements and wandering nightly through our great cities, and here again are the property-owners complaining that no one will come and live in their houses. And in all these cases production is held up because there is no demand. Is not this an intolerable state of affairs? What now shall we say about the incentive to work? Is it not obvious that the present incentive is wrong and mischievous up to the point of starvation and ruination. That which induces us to produce silks and diamonds and dreadnoughts and toy pomeranians, whilst bread and boots and houses are needed, is wholly and absolutely wrong.

To-day the scramble is to compete for the greatest profits. If there is more profit to be made in satisfying my lady's passing whim than there is in feeding hungry children, then competition brings us in feverish haste to supply the former, whilst cold charity or the poor law can supply the latter, or leave it unsupplied, just as it feels disposed. That is how it works out. This is the reason: the producer and the consumer are the two essentials; a constant flow of wealth passes from one to the other, but between them stands the profit-maker and his competition system, and he is able to divert that stream into what channel best pleases him. Sweep him away and the producer and the consumer are brought into direct relationship with one another. When he and his competitive system are gone there will still remain the only useful incentive to work, and that will be the needs of the people. The need for the common necessities and the highest luxuries of life will be not only fundamental as it is to-day, but the direct motive power behind all production and distribution. It is obvious, I think, that this is the ideal to be aimed at, for it is only in such circumstances that production and distribution will be carried on for its legitimate purpose — to satisfy the needs of the people; and for no other reason.

No. 8

Socialism or Social Democracy must come first; then we may get Anarchism. First, then, work for Social Democracy.

This is one of those oft-repeated statements which apparently have no argument or meaning behind them. The modern Socialist, or at least the Social Democrats, have steadily worked for centralisation, and complete and perfect organisation and control by those in authority above the people. The Anarchist, on the other hand, believes in the abolition of that central power, and expects the free society to grow into existence from below, starting with those organisations

and free agreements among the people themselves. It is difficult to see how, by making a central power control everything, we can be making a step towards the abolition of that power.

No. 9

Under Anarchism the country would be invaded by a foreign enemy.

At present the country is held by that which we consider to be an enemy — the landlord and capitalist class. If we are able to free ourselves from this, which is well established and at home on the land, surely we should be able to make shift against a foreign invading force of men, who are fighting, not for their own country, but for their weekly wage.

It must be remembered, too, that Anarchism is an international movement, and if we do establish a revolution in this country, in other countries the people would have become at least sufficiently rebellious for their master class to consider it advisable to keep their armies at home.

No. 10

We are all dependent upon one another, and cannot live isolated lives. Absolute freedom, therefore, is impossible.

Enough has been said already to show that we do not believe people would live isolated lives in a free society. To get the full meaning out of life we must co-operate, and to co-operate we must make agreements with our fellow-men. But to suppose that such agreements mean a limitation of freedom is surely an absurdity; on the contrary, they are the exercise of our freedom.

If we are going to invent a dogma that to make agreements is to damage freedom, then at once freedom becomes tyrannical, for it forbids men to take the most ordinary everyday pleasures. For example, I cannot go for a walk with my friend because it is against the principle of Liberty that I should agree to be at a certain place at a certain time to meet him. I cannot in the least extend my own power beyond myself, because to do so I must co-operate with someone else, and co-operation implies an agreement, and that is against Liberty. It will be seen at once that this argument is absurd. I do not limit my liberty, but simply exercise it, when I agree with my friend to go for a walk.

If, on the other hand, I decide from my superior knowledge that it is good for my friend to take exercise, and therefore I attempt to compel him to go for a walk, then I begin to limit freedom. This is the difference between free agreement and government.

No. 11

If two people want the same piece of land under Anarchism, how will you settle the dispute?

First of all, it is well to notice here that Questions 11, 12, and 13 all belong to the same class. No. 11, at least, is based upon a fallacy. If there are two persons who want the exclusive right to the same thing, it is quite obvious that there is no satisfactory solution to the problem. It does not matter in the least what system of society you suggest, you cannot possibly satisfy that position. It is exactly as if I were suggesting a new system of mathematics, and someone asked me: "Yes, but under this new system suppose you want to make ten go into one hundred eleven times?" The truth is that if you do a problem by arithmetic, or if you do it by algebra, or trigonometry, or

by any other method, the same answer must be produced for the given problem; and just as you cannot make ten go into one hundred more than ten times, so you cannot make more than one person have the exclusive right to one thing. If two people want it, then at least one must remain in want, whatever may be the form of society in which they are living. Therefore, to begin with, we see that there cannot be a satisfactory way of settling this trouble, for the objection has been raised by simply supposing an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

All that we can say is that such disputes are very much better settled without the interference of authority. If the two were reasonable, they would probably mutually agree to allow their dispute to be settled by some mutual friend whose judgment they could trust. But if instead of taking this sane course they decide to set up a fixed authority, disaster will be the inevitable result. In the first place, this authority will have to be given power wherewith to enforce its judgment in such matters. What will then take place? The answer is quite simple. Feeling it is a superior force, it will naturally in each case take to itself the best of what is disputed, and allot the rest to its friends.

What a strange question is this. It supposes that two people who meet on terms of equality and disagree could not be reasonable or just. But, on the other hand, it supposes that a third party, starting with an unfair advantage, and backed up by violence, will be the incarnation of justice itself. Commonsense should certainly warn us against such a supposition, and if we are lacking in this commodity, then we may learn the lesson by turning to the facts of life. There we see everywhere Authority standing by, and in the name of justice and fair play using its organised violence in order to take the lion's share of the world's wealth for the governmental class.

We can only say, then, in answer to such a question, that if people are going to be quarrelsome and constantly disagree, then, of course, no state of society will suit them, for they are unsocial animals. If they are only occasionally so, then each case must stand on its merits and be settled by those concerned.

No. 12

Suppose one district wants to construct a railway to pass through a neighbouring community, which opposes it. How would you settle this?

It is curious that this question is not only asked by those who support the present system, but it is also frequently put by the Socialists. Yet surely it implies at once the aggressive spirit of Capitalism, for is it not the capitalist who talks of opening up the various countries of the world, and does he not do this in the very first instance by having a war in order that he may run his railways through, in spite of the local opposition by the natives? Now, if you have a country in which there are various communes, it stands to reason that the people in those communes will want facilities for travelling, and for receiving and sending their goods. That will not be much more true of one little community than of another. This, then, not only implies a local railway, but a continuous railway running from one end of the country to the other. If a certain district, then, is going to object to have such a valuable asset given to it, it will surely be that there is some reason for such an objection. That being so, would it not be folly to have an authority to force that community to submit to the railway passing through?

If this reason does not exist, we are simply supposing a society of unreasonable people and asking how they should co-operate together. The truth is that they could not co-operate together,

and it is quite useless to look for any state of society which will suit such a people. The objection, therefore, need not be raised against Anarchism, but against society itself. What would a government society propose to do? Would it start a civil war over the matter? Would it build a prison large enough to enclose this community, and imprison all the people for resisting the law? In fact, what power has any authority to deal with the matter which the Anarchists have not got?

The question is childish. It is simply based on the supposition that people are unreasonable, and if such suppositions are allowed to pass as arguments, then any proposed state of society may be easily argued out of existence. I must repeat that many of these questions are of this type, and a reader with a due sense of logic will be able to see how worthless they are, and will not need to read the particular answers I have given to them.

No. 13

Suppose your free people want to build a bridge across a river, but they disagree as to position, how will you settle it?

To begin with, it is obvious, but important, to notice that it is not *I,* but *they,* who would settle it. The way it would work out, I imagine, is something like this:

We will call the two groups who differ A and B. Then —

1. A. may be of opinion that the B. scheme would be utterly useless to it, and that the only possible position for the bridge is where it has suggested. In which case it will say: "Help our scheme, or don't co-operate at all."

2. A. may be of opinion that the B. scheme is useless, but, recognising the value of B.'s help, it may be willing to budge a few yards, and so effect a compromise with B.

3. A., finding it can get no help from B. unless it gives way altogether, may do so, believing that the help thus obtained is worth more than the sacrifice of position.

These are, I think, the three courses open to A. The same three are open to B. I will leave it to the reader to combine the two, and I think he will find the result will be either —

1. That the bridge is built in the A. position, with, we will say, the half-hearted support of B.; or

2. The same thing, but with letters A. and B. reversed; or

3. The bridge is built somewhere between, with the partial support of both parties ; or

4. Each party pursues its own course, independent of the other.

In any case it will be seen, I hope, that the final structure will be *representative,* and that, on the other hand, if one party was able to force the other to pay for what it did not want, the result would not be representative or just.

The usefulness of this somewhat dreary argument will be seen if it be applied not merely to bridge-building but to all the activities of life. By so doing we are able to imagine growing into existence a state of society where groups of people work together so far as they agree, and work

separately when they do not. The institutions they construct will be in accord with their wishes and needs. It will indeed be representative. How different is this from the politician's view of things, who always wants to force the people to co-operate in running his idea of society!

No. 14

What would you do with the criminal?

There is an important question which should come before this, but which our opponents never seem to care to ask. First of all, we have to decide who are the criminals, or rather, even before this, we have to come to an understanding as to who is to decide who are the criminals? To-day the rich man says to the poor man: " If we were not here as your guardians you would be beset by robbers who would take away from you all your possessions." But the rich man has all the wealth and luxury that the poor man has produced, and whilst he claims to have protected the people from robbery he has secured for himself the lion's share in the name of the law. Surely then it becomes a question for the poor man which he has occasion to dread most — the robber, who is very unlikely to take anything from him, or the law, which allows the rich man to take all the best of that which is manufactured.

To the majority of people the criminals in society are not to be very much dreaded even to-day, for they are for the most part people who are at war with those who own the land and have captured all the means of life. In a free society, where no such ownership existed, and where all that is necessary could be obtained by all that have any need, the criminal will always tend to die out. To-day, under our present system, he is always tending to become more numerous.

No. 15

It is necessary for every great town to have a drainage. Suppose someone refuses to connect up, what would you do with him?

This objection is another of the "supposition" class, all of which have really been answered in dealing with question No. 1. It is based on the unsocial man, whereas all systems of society must be organised for social people. The truth, of course, is that in a free society the experts on sanitation would get together and organise our drainage system, and the people who lived in the district would be only too glad to find these convenient arrangements made for them. But still it is possible to suppose that somebody will not agree to this; what then will you do with him? What do our Government friends suggest?

The only thing that they can do which in our Anarchist society we would not do, is to put him in prison, for we can use all the arguments to persuade him that they can. How much would the town gain by doing this? Here is a description of an up-to-date prison cell into which he might be thrown:

> "I slept in one of the ordinary cells, which have sliding panes, leaving at the host two openings about six inches square. The windows are set in the wall high up, and are 3 by 1½ or 2 feet, area. Added to this they are very dirty, so that the light in the cell is always dim. After the prisoner has been locked in the cell all night the air is unbearable, and its unhealthiness is increased by damp."

> "The 'convenience' supplied in the cell is totally inadequate, and even if it be of a proper size and does not leak, the fact that it remains unemptied from evening till morning is, in case of illness especially, very insanitary and dangerous to health. 'Lavatory time' is permitted only at a fixed hour twice a day, only one water-closet being provided for twenty-three cells."[1]

Thus we see that whilst we are going to guarantee this man being cleanly by means of violence, we have no guarantee that the very violence itself which we use will not be filthy.

But there is another way of looking at this question. Mr. Charles Mayl, M.B. of New College, Oxford, after an outbreak of typhoid fever, was asked to examine the drainage of Windsor; he stated that:

> "In a previous visitation of typhoid fever the poorest and lowest parts of the town had entirely escaped, whilst the epidemic had been very fatal in good houses. The difference was that whilst the better houses were all connected with sewers, the poor part of the town bad no drains, but made use of cesspools in the gardens. And this is by no means an isolated instance."

It would not be out of place to quote Herbert Spencer here:

> "One part of our Sanitary Administration having insisted upon a drainage system by which Oxford, Heading, Maidenhead, Windsor, etc., pollute the water which Londoners have to drink, another part of our Sanitary Administration makes loud protests against the impurity of water which he charges with causing diseases — not remarking, however, that law-enforced arrangements have produced the impurity."

We begin to see therefore that the man who objected to connecting his house with the drains would probably be a man who is interested in the subject, and who knows something about sanitation. It would be of the utmost importance that he should be listened to and his objections removed, instead of shutting him up in an unhealthy prison. The fact is, the rebel is here just as important as he is in other matters, and he can only profitably be eliminated by giving him satisfaction, not by trying to crush him out.

As the man of the drains has only been taken as an example by our objector, it would be interesting here to quote a similar case where the regulations for stamping out cattle diseases were objected to by someone who was importing cattle. In a letter to the *Times,* signed "Landowner," dated 2nd August, 1872, the writer tells how he bought "ten fine young steers, perfectly free from any symptom of disease, and passed sound by the inspector of foreign stock." Soon after their arrival in England they were attacked by foot and mouth disease. On inquiry he found that foreign stock, however healthy, "mostly all go down with it after the passage." The Government regulations for stamping out this disease were that the stock should be driven from the steamer into the pens for a limited number of hours. There seems therefore very little doubt that it was in this quarantine that the healthy animals contracted the disease and spread it among the English cattle.[2]

[1] "Women and Prisons," Fabian Tract No. 16

[2] The typhoid and the cattle disease cases are both quoted in the notes to Herbert Spener's "The Study of Soci-

> "Every new drove of cattle is kept for hours in an infected pen. Unless the successive droves have been all healthy (which the very institution of the quarantine implies that they have not been) some of them have left in the pen disease matter from their mouths and feet. Even if disinfectants are used after each occupation, the risk is great — the disinfectant is almost certain to be inadequate. Nay, even if the pen is adequately disinfected every time, yet if there is not also a complete disinfection of the landing appliances, the landing-stage and the track to the pen, the disease will be communicated. The quarantine regulations might properly be called 'regulations for the better diffusion of cattle diseases.'"

Would our objector to Anarchism suggest that the man who refuses to put his cattle in these pens should be sent to prison?

No. 16

Even if you could overthrow the Government to-morrow and establish Anarchism, the same system would soon grow up again.

This objection is quite true, except that we do not propose to overthrow the Government to-morrow. If I (or we as a group of Anarchists) came to the conclusion that I was to be the liberator of humanity, and if by some means I could manage to blow up the King, the Houses of Lords and Commons, the police force, and, in a word, all persons and institutions which make up the Government — if I were successful in all this, and expected to see the people enjoying freedom ever afterwards as a result, then, no doubt, I should find myself greatly mistaken.

The chief results of my action would be to arouse an immense indignation on the part of the majority of the people, and a reorganisation by them of all the forces of government.

The reason why this method would fail is very easy to understand. It is because the strength of the Government rests not with itself, but with the people. A great tyrant may be a fool, and not a superman. His strength lies not in himself, but in the superstition of the people who think that it is right to obey him. So long as that superstition exists it is useless for some liberator to cut off the head of tyranny; the people will create another, for they have grown accustomed to rely on something outside themselves.

Suppose, however, that the people develop, and become strong in their love of liberty, and self-reliant, then the foremost of its rebels will overthrow tyranny, and backed by the general sentiment of their age their action will never be undone. Tyranny will never be raised from the dead. A landmark in the progress of humanity will have been passed and put behind for ever.

So the Anarchist rebel when he strikes his blow at Governments understands that he is no liberator with a divine mission to free humanity, but he is a part of that humanity struggling onwards towards liberty.

If, then, by some external means an Anarchist Revolution could be, so to speak, supplied ready-made and thrust upon the people, it is true that they would reject it and rebuild the old society. If, on the other hand, the people develop their ideas of freedom, and then themselves get rid of the last stronghold of tyranny — the Government — then indeed the Revolution will be permanently accomplished.

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ology."

No. 17

If you abolish government, what will you put in its place?

This seems to an Anarchist very much as if a patient asked the doctor, "If you take away my illness, what will you give me in its place?" The Anarchist's argument is that government fulfils no useful purpose. Most of what it does is mischievous, and the rest could be done better without its interference. It is the headquarters of the profit-makers, the rent-takers, and of all those who take from but who do not give to society. When this class is abolished by the people so organising themselves that they will run the factories and use the land for the benefit of their free communities, *i.e.,* for their own benefit, then the Government must also be swept away, since its purpose will be gone. The only thing then that will be put in the place of government will be the free organisations of the workers. When Tyranny is abolished Liberty remains, just as when disease is eradicated health remains.

No. 18

We cannot all agree and think alike and be perfect, and therefore laws are necessary, or we shall have chaos.

It is because we cannot all agree that Anarchism becomes necessary. If we all thought alike it would not matter in the least if we had one common law to which we must all submit. But as many of us think differently, it becomes absurd to try to force us to act the same by means of the Government which we are silly enough to call representative.

A very important point is touched upon here. It is because Anarchists recognise the absolute necessity of allowing for this difference among men that they are Anarchists. The truth is that all progress is accompanied by a process of differentiation, or of the increasing difference of parts. If we take the most primitive organism we can find it is simply a tiny globule of plasm, that is, of living substance. It is entirely undifferentiated: that is to say, all its parts are alike. An organism next above this in the evolutionary scale will be found to have developed a nucleus. And now the tiny living thing is composed of two distinctly different parts, the cell-body and its nucleus. If we went on comparing various organisms we should find that all those of a more complex nature were made up of clusters of these tiny organisms or cells. In the most primitive of these clusters there would be very little difference between one cell and another. As we get a little higher we find that certain cells in the clusters have taken upon themselves certain duties, and for this purpose have arranged themselves in special ways. By and by, when we get to the higher animals, we shall find that this process has advanced so far that some cells have grouped together to form the breathing apparatus, that is, the lungs; others are responsible for the circulation of the blood; others make up the nervous tissue; and so on, so that we say they form the various "organs" of the body. The point we have to notice is that the higher we get in the animal or vegetable kingdom, the more difference we find between the tiny units or cells which compose the body or organism. Applying this argument to the social body or organism which we call society, it is clear that the more highly developed that organism becomes, the more different will be the units (*i.e.*, the people) and organs (*i.e.,* institutions and clubs) which compose it.

(*For an answer to the argument based on the supposed need of a controlling centre for the "social organism," see Objection No. 21.*)

When, therefore, we want progress we must allow people to differ. This is the very essential difference between the Anarchists and the Governmentalists. The Government is always endeavouring to make men uniform. So literally true is this that in most countries it actually forces them into the uniform of the soldier or the convict. Thus Government shows itself as the great reactionary tendency. The Anarchist, on the other hand, would break down this and would allow always for the development of new ideas, new growth, and new institutions; so that society would be responsive always to the influence of its really greatest men, and to the surrounding influences, whatever they may be.

It would be easier to get at this argument from a simpler standpoint. It is really quite clear that if we were all agreed, or if we were all forced to act as if we did agree, we could not have any progress whatever. Change can take place only when someone disagrees with what is, and with the help of a small minority succeeds in putting that disagreement into practice. No Government makes allowance for this fact, and consequently all progress which is made has to come in spite of Governments, not by their agency.

I am tempted to touch upon yet another argument here, although I have already given this question too much space. Let me add just one example of the findings of modern science. Everyone knows that there is sex relationship and sex romance in plant life just as there is in the animal world, and it is the hasty conclusion with most of us that sex has been evolved for the purposes of reproduction of the species. A study of the subject, however, proves that plants were amply provided with the means of reproduction before the first signs of sex appeared. Science then has had to ask itself: what was the utility of sex evolution? The answer to this conundrum it has been found lies in the fact that "the sexual method of reproduction multiplies variation as no other method of reproduction can."[3]

If I have over-elaborated this answer it is because I have wished to interest (but by no means to satisfy) anyone who may see the importance of the subject. A useful work is waiting to be accomplished by some enthusiast who will study differentiation scientifically, and show the bearing of the facts on the organisation of human society.

No. 19

If you abolish government, you will do away with the marriage laws.
We shall.

No. 20

How will you regulate sexual relationship and family affairs?

It is curious that sentimental people will declare that love is our greatest attribute, and that freedom is the highest possible condition. Yet if we propose that love shall go free they are shocked and horrified.

There is one really genuine difficulty, however, which people do meet in regard to this question. With a very limited understanding they look at things as they are to-day, and see all kinds of

[3] "The Evolution of Sex in Plants," by Professor J. Merle Coulter. It is interesting to add that he closes his book with these words: "Its [sexuality's] significance lies in the fact that it makes organic evolution more rapid and far more varied."

repulsive happenings: unwanted children, husbands longing to be free from their wives, and — there is no need to enumerate them. For all this, the sincere thinker is able to see the marriage law is no remedy; but, on the other hand, he sees also that the abolition of that law would also in itself be no remedy.

This is true, no doubt. We cannot expect a well-balanced humanity if we give freedom on one point and slavery on the remainder. The movement towards free love is only logical and useful if it takes its place as part of the general movement towards emancipation.

Love will only come to a normal and healthy condition when it is set in a world without slums and poverty, and without all the incentives to crime which exist to-day. When such a condition is reached it will be folly to bind men and women together, or keep them apart, by laws. Liberty and free agreement must be the basis of this most essential relationship as surely as it must be of all others.

No. 21

Society is an organism, and an organism is controlled at its centre; thus man is controlled by his brain, and society by its Government.

This is one of the arguments so often used by the so-called scientific Socialists. It is quite true that society as a whole, if it is not an organism, at least can be very closely compared to one. But the most interesting thing is that our scientific objectors have quite forgotten one of the most important facts about the classification of organisms. All organisms may be divided into one of two classes — the "morphonta" or the "bionta." Now each morphonta organism is bound together into one whole necessarily by its structure; a bionta organism, on the contrary, is a more or less simple structure, bound together physiologically; that is, by functions rather than by its actual form. This can be made much simpler. A dog, for example, which we all know is an organism, is a morphonta, for it is bound together necessarily by its structure; if we cut a dog in two, we do not expect the two halves to live, or to develop into two complete dogs. But if we take a plant and cut it in two, the probability is that if we place it in proper conditions each half of that plant will develop into as healthy an organism as the original single one. Now, if we are going to call society an organism, it is quite clear to which of these two classes it belongs; for if we cut society in two and take away one half the people which compose it, and place them in proper conditions, they will develop a new society akin to the old one from which they have been separated.

The really interesting thing about this is that the morphonta — the dog — is by all means an organism controlled by the brain; but, on the other hand, the bionta is in no case a centralised organism. So that so far as the analogy does hold good it certainly is entirely in favour of the Anarchist conception of society, and not of a centralised State.

There is, too, another way of looking at this. In all organisms the simple cell is the unit, just as in society the individual is a unit of the organism. Now, if we study the evolution of organisms (which we have touched upon in Question No. 18), we shall find that the simple cell clusters with or co-operates with its fellow-cells, not because it is bossed or controlled into the position, but because it found, in its simple struggle for existence, that it could only live if the whole of which it formed a part lived also. This principle holds good throughout all organic nature. The cells which cluster together to form the organs of a man are not compelled to do so, or in any way controlled by any outside force; the individual struggle for life forces each to take its place

in the organ of which it forms a part. Again, the organs themselves are not centralised, but are simply interdependent; derange one, and you upset more or less the organs of all, but neither can dictate how the other shall work. If the digestive organs are out of order, it is true that they will probably have an effect upon the brain; but beyond this they have no control or authority over the brain. The reverse of this is equally true. The brain may know absolutely well that the digestive organs are for some reason or other neglecting their duties, but it is unable to control them or tell them to do otherwise. Each organ does its duty because in doing so it is fulfilling its life-purpose, just as each cell takes its place and carries on its functions for the same purpose.

Viewed in this way, we see the complete organism (the man) as the result of the free co-operation of the various organs (the heart, the brains, the lungs, etc.), whilst the organs in their turn are the result of the equally free co-operation of the simple cells. Thus the individual life-struggle of the cell results in the highest product of organic nature. It is this primitive struggle of the individual cell which is, as it were, the creative force behind the whole complexity of organic nature, including man, of this wonderful civilisation.

If we apply the analogy to society, we must take it that the ideal form would be that in which the free individuals in developing their lives group together into free institutions, and in which these free institutions are naturally mutually dependent upon the other, but in which there is no institution claiming authority or the power to in any way control or curb the development of any of the other institutions or of the individual.

Thus society would grow from the simple individual to the complex whole, and not as our centralisers try to see it — a development from the complex centre back to the simple parts.

No. 22

You can't change human nature.

To begin with, let me point out that I am a part of human nature, and by all my own development I am contributing to and helping in the development and modification of human nature.

If the argument is that I cannot change human nature and mould it into any form at will, then, of course, it is quite true. If, on the other hand, it is intended to suggest that human nature remains ever the same, then the argument is hopelessly unsound. Change seems to be one of the fundamental laws of existence, and especially of organic nature. Man has developed from the lowest animals, and who can say that he has reached the limits of his possibilities?

However, as it so happens, social reformers and revolutionists do not so much rely on the fact that human nature will change as they do upon the theory that the same nature will act differently under different circumstances.

A man becomes an outlaw and a criminal to-day because he steals to feed his family. In a free society there would be no such reason for theft, and consequently this same criminal born into such a world might become a respectable family man. A change for the worse? Possibly; but the point is that it is a change. The same character acts differently under the new circumstances.

To sum up, then: (1) Human nature does change and develop along certain lines, the direction of which we may influence. (2) The fundamental fact is that nature acts according to the condition in which it finds itself.

The latter part of the next answer (No. 23) will be found to apply equally here.

No. 23

Who would do the dirty work under Anarchism?

To-day machinery is introduced to replace, as far as possible, the highly paid man. It can only do this very partially, but it is obvious that since machinery is to save the cost of production it will be applied to those things where the cost is considerable. In those branches where labour is very cheap there is not the same incentive to supersede it by machines.

Now things are so strangely organised at present that it is just the dirty and disagreeable work that men will do cheaply, and consequently there is no great rush to invent machines to take their place. In a free society, on the other hand, it is clear that the disagreeable work will be one of the first things that machinery will be called upon to eliminate. It is quite fair to argue, therefore, that the disagreeable work will, to a large extent, disappear in a state of Anarchism.

This, however, leaves the question only partially answered. Some time ago, during a strike at Leeds, the roadmen and scavengers refused to do their work. The respectable inhabitants of Leeds recognised the danger of this state of affairs, and organised themselves to do the dirty work. University students were sweeping the streets and carrying boxes of refuse. They answered the question better than I can. They have taught us that a free people would recognise the necessity of such work being done, and would one way or another organise to do it.

Let me give another example more interesting than this and widely differing from it, thus showing how universally true is my answer.

Within civilised society probably it would be difficult to find two classes differing more widely than the University student of to-day and the labourer of Western Ireland nearly a hundred years ago. At Ralahine in 1830 was started the most successful of the many Co-operative or Communist experiments for which that period was remarkable. There, on the poorest of bog-soil, amongst "the lowest order of Irish poor, discontented, disorderly and vicious, and under the worst circumstances imaginable," an ideal little experimental community was formed. Among the agreements entered into by these *practical impossibilists* was one which said that "no member be expected to perform any service or work but such as is agreeable to his or her feelings," yet certain it is that the disagreeable work was daily performed. The following dialogue between a passing stage-coach passenger and a member of the community, whom he found working in water which reached his middle, is recorded:

> "Are you working by yourself?" inquired the traveller. "Yes," was the answer. "Where is your steward?" "We have no steward." "Who is your master?" "We have no master. We are on a new system." "Then who sent you to do this work?" "The committee," replied the man in the dam. "Who is the committee?" asked the mail-coach visitor, "Some of the members." "What members do you mean?" "The ploughmen and labourers who are appointed by us as a committee. I belong to the new systemites."

Members of this community were elected by ballot among the peasants of Ralahine. "There was no inequality established among them," says G. J. Holyoake,[4] to whom I am indebted for the above description, he adds:

[4] "History of Co-operation."

> "It seems incredible that this simple and reasonable form of government[5] should supersede the government of the bludgeon and the blunderbuss — the customary mode by which Irish labourers of that day regulated their industrial affairs. Yet peace and prosperity prevailed through an arrangement of equity."

The community was successful for three and a half years, and then its end was brought about by causes entirely external. The man who had given his land up for the purposes of the experiment lost his money by gambling, and the colony of 618 acres had to be forfeited. This example of the introduction of a new system among such unpromising circumstances might well have been used in answer to Objection No. 22 — "You can't change human nature."

No. 24

But you must have a Government. Every orchestra has its conductor to whom all must submit. It is the same with society.

This objection would really not be worth answering but that it is persistently used by State Socialists against Anarchists, and is even printed by them in the writings of one of their great leaders. The objection is chiefly of interest in that it shows us painfully plainly the outlook of these wonderful reformers, who evidently want to see society regulated in every detail by the batons of Government,

Their confusion, however, between the control of the conductor's baton and that of Government really seems to indicate that they are not aware of any difference between Government and Liberty. The relationship of the subject to the Government is entirely unlike that of the musician to the conductor. In a free society the musician would unite with others interested in music for one reason only: he wishes to express himself, and finds that he can do so better with the assistance of others. Hence he *makes use of* his brother musicians, while they similarly make use of him. Next, he and they find they are up against a difficulty unless they have a signalman to *relate* their various notes. They therefore determine *to make use of* someone who is capable to do this. He, on the other hand, stands in just the same relationship to them: he is making use of them to express himself in music. If at any time either party finds the other unserviceable, it simply ceases to co-operate. Any member of the party may, if he feels inclined, get up at any moment and walk away. The conductor can at any minute throw down his baton, or upset the rest by wilfully going wrong. Any member of the party may at any time spoil all their efforts if he chooses to do so. There is no provision for such emergencies, and no way of preventing them. No one can be compelled to contribute towards the upkeep of the enterprise. Practically all the objections which are raised against Anarchism may be raised against this free organisation. What will you do with the drummer who won't drum? What will you do with the man who plays out of tune? What will you do with the man who talks instead of playing? What will you do with the unclean man who may sit next to you? What will you do with the man who won't pay his share? etc., etc.

The objections are endless if you choose to base them on what *might* happen, but this fails to alter the fact that if we consider what actually does happen we find a free organisation of this kind entirely practical.

[5] I need not, I think, stay to explain the sense in which this word is used. The committee were worers, not

It is not, I hope, necessary now to point out the folly of those who pretend that such an organisation is analogous to Government.

In a Government organisation people are bound together not by a common purpose, but by law, with the threat of prison behind. The enterprise is supported, not in accordance with the amount of interest taken in it, but by a general compulsion. The part played by each is dictated, and can be enforced. In a free organisation it is merely suggested, and the suggestion is followed only if the individual agrees, for there can be no compulsion.

Conclusion

specialised advisers; above all, they had no authority and could only suggest and not issue orders. They were, therefore, not a Government.

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